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ON PAGE A3

NEW YORK TIMES
24 November 1984

GREEK COURT VOIDS A LIBEL SENTENCE

Correspondent's Jail Term Is
Overturned in Case Tied to
Greece's Largest Daily

ATHENS, Nov. 23 (AP) — The Greek Supreme Court has overturned a one-year libel sentence against a Cypriot journalist who asserted in a book that Greece's largest-selling daily newspaper operated in cooperation with the K.G.B.

The case concerns Paul Anastasiades, who writes under the name Paul Anastasi and is a correspondent for The Daily Telegraph of London and a part-time correspondent for The New York Times.

In a decision issued Wednesday, the five-member court ruled that an appeals court verdict last May failed to explain why the sentence had not been suspended as the prosecutor had suggested.

The Supreme Court ordered that another hearing be held by the appeals court but did not specify a date.

Months of Arranging

Legal sources said a new hearing by the three-member appeals court would probably take months to arrange, making it doubtful the case would ever be returned to court.

Under Greece's law on the press, the sentence against Mr. Anastasiades is to be dropped automatically at the end of the year, since libel charges can be pressed only within 18 months after the date of the purported offense.

"I am pleased with the legal improvement in my case," Mr. Anastasiades said. "I want to stress that I have never doubted the accuracy of my findings."

Mr. Anastasiades was charged with libel and defamation in June 1983 because his 300-page book, "Take the Nation in Your Hands," and a press release promoting it charged that the daily newspaper Ethnos operated in cooperation with the "disinformation department" of the K.G.B., the Soviet intelligence and internal-security agency. The book and press release also described the publisher of Ethnos, George Bobolas, as an "agent of influence" for the Soviet Union.

Sentence Changed on Appeal

A misdemeanors court found Mr. Anastasiades guilty of the charges in December 1983 and sentenced him to two years' imprisonment. He was freed

pending an appeal court hearing.

The appeals court cut the sentence to one year — a term that can be paid off with a fine under Greek law — and the prosecutor recommended that the sentence be suspended. Mr. Anastasiades took the case to the Supreme Court after the appeals court refused to suspend the sentence.

At a Supreme Court hearing Nov. 2, the lawyer for Mr. Anastasiades asked for the verdict to be thrown out "because of the vast number of irregularities that occurred at previous hearings, both on technicalities and on matters of substance."

The Supreme Court delivered its decision in writing about three weeks after the hearing, in accordance with its usual procedure.

Suits and Countersuits

The case has spawned a series of suits and countersuits involving Mr. Anastasiades; the Ethnos publisher, Mr. Bobolas, and its editor, Alexander Filipopoulos. Sales of the book by Mr. Anastasiades were banned by court order. A suit filed by Mr. Anastasiades against Mr. Filipopoulos and Mr. Bobolas for describing him in Ethnos as "a conspirator and C.I.A. agent" was rejected by a misdemeanors court last December.

In the book, Mr. Anastasiades asserted that Ethnos seeks "to mold public opinion in Soviet interests and pressure the Greek Government to loosen its political and military ties with the West."

He said Ethnos published pro-Soviet propaganda, ignored news presenting Eastern Europe in an unfavorable light and rewrote stories to promote Soviet views.

Charge of Wiretapping

An afternoon tabloid that sells more than 200,000 copies daily, Ethnos has the largest daily newspaper circulation in Greece. It first appeared in September 1981, a month before Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu and his Socialist Government came to power.

Ethnos, which competes against more than a dozen daily newspapers, generally backs the Government.

What may be the final court case in

the Ethnos affair has been scheduled for Dec. 13. Mr. Filipopoulos and Mr. Bobolas have been ordered to stand trial on charges of tapping telephones at The New York Times's office in the Greek capital.

In the first such case since wiretapping was outlawed by the 1975 Constitution, the Ethnos editor and publisher are also accused of publishing extracts from the illegally obtained tape-recordings.

In its July 28, 1983, issue, Ethnos printed what it asserted were extracts from a conversation between Mr. Anastasiades and a C.I.A. agent. Ethnos said the two men were discussing plans to destabilize democracy in Greece and eliminate members of the Ethnos staff. Nothing in the published excerpts supported these accusations.

If convicted on the charges brought by the Athens district attorney, Leonidas Lazarakos, the men could be sentenced to prison for five years.